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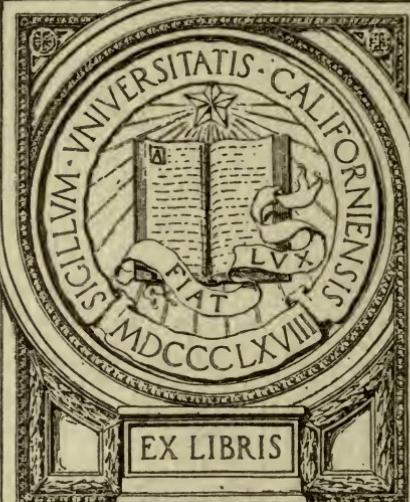


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THE HIGH SCHOOL FRATERNITY

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE, HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS'
ASSOCIATION, C. T. A.

W. J. COOPER, Chairman
High School, Berkeley, Cal.

THIS committee was appointed by President Templeton at the meeting December, 1911, at Stockton, for the purpose of investigating and making a report of the high school fraternity situation with recommendations. The committee consists of W. J. Cooper, Berkeley High School, F. H. Clark, Lowell High School, and James Ferguson, Polytechnic High School of San Francisco.

After considerable study of the literature on the subject, the history of the agitation and nature of the anti-fraternity laws existing in the various states, the committee respectfully reports as follows:

HISTORY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL FRATERNITIES

The High School Fraternity seems to have begun in 1869 in Schenectady, New York, with the organization of a boys' literary and debating club. Since this club was composed of students in the old classical school, later the Schenectady High School, it sought a classical name, and adopted the name of Alpha Zeta. The minutes of the board of education for January, 1870, show that the Alpha Zeta Debating Club was given permission to hold its meetings in the school building. It was 17 years before Alpha Zeta had a second chapter. In the meantime several other similar organizations had come into existence, one of them in San Francisco. Alpha Zeta now has only 8 chapters with a total membership of 1451 in 1910, and they are all located in cities of the state of New York.

When the anti-fraternity agitation became quite general, there was organized in the United States, in February, 1909, a grand interfraternity council whose object (stated in its constitution) is "To promote the usefulness of preparatory and high school fraternities; to place before the public the objects of these organizations and create a body by which all grievances between fraternities, school and civil

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officials can be fairly terminated." This council only admitted into its membership at first fraternities having more than 5 chapters and at least 10 years old. In 1910 its roster numbered 25 fraternities with a membership of 31,455. Others have joined, however, and recent reports state that there are now 46 members of the council. There are 11 fraternities (boys') of national importance in California at the present time in addition to many locals. Gamma Eta Kappa and Phi Chi fraternities originated in San Francisco. The former is one of the oldest and strongest fraternities in the United States. It likewise began as a literary organization in the old Boys' High School, San Francisco, now the Lowell High School. The Theta Chi fraternity, which has chapters in all of the larger cities, exists only within the State of California. There are now one or more fraternities, excluding locals, in each of the following cities: San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda, San Jose, Santa Cruz, Sacramento, Stockton, Fresno, Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Barbara, San Rafael, Hollywood, Chico, Marysville, Santa Rosa, Visalia, Bakersfield, Eureka, Riverside, San Bernardino, and the Belmont Private School. In the above we have dealt only with fraternities, making no count on the sororities, of which there are 4 of great importance in California, namely: Alpha Sigma, Lambda Theta Phi, Omega Nu, Delta Iota Chi, and three others of less importance.

ANTI-FRATERNITY AGITATION

The growth of fraternities had been very slow during the years immediately following the founding of the first 4 or 5. During the second decade of their existence, from 1880-90, their growth was fairly steady. The third decade, from 1890-1900, witnessed quite a rapid spread of the fraternity idea, not only in the extension of the older societies, but in the formation of new organizations. The early part of the fourth decade beginning 1900 saw the creation of a great many new societies.

The two great centers of fraternity life were the schools of New York City and those in and about Chicago. A third important center was the schools of the San Francisco Bay Region, and in the early part of the decade beginning 1900 there was a marked tendency on the part of the eastern fraternities to establish a chain of chapters on the Pacific Coast.

By some of the practices of some chapters the fraternities began to make themselves obnoxious, especially in the schools of Chicago, and a committee was appointed by the late President Harper of the University of Chicago. This committee, headed by Spencer R. Smith of the Wendell Phillips High School, Chicago, sent 18 questions to 464 of the largest secondary schools in the United States. Three hundred and six schools replied, of which 120 had fraternities, from 1 to 6 in number, and many had a sorority. In this latter respect the Girls' High School of San Francisco was in the lead with 7 sororities.

The publication of this report led to a period of writing on the subject. Articles ranged all the way from thoughtful expressions to highly sensational articles with cartoons. The great mass of articles emphasized the bad points of secret societies and urged their abolition, which brought on legislation in many states. The following arguments were advanced during this period of agitation:

In favor of the societies: 1. They are useful in the development of school spirit and aid in the discipline of the school. 2. They are beneficial to individual membership. Cases are cited to establish this. 3. They foster friendship at the period in life when permanent friendships are made. 4. The tendency to organize is a modern and natural one, and organizations will exist secretly if not openly. 5. The conduct of the pupils is a matter for regulation by parents rather than by school boards.

The jist of the arguments against the fraternities is:

1. They are detrimental to the regular work of the school, causing, through petty jealousy, a break up of regular societies of the schools, and as literary and debating societies, and form narrow cliques.

2. They are imitations of college fraternities, whose main reason for existence is to furnish home life for the student. The high school fraternity not only does not furnish home life, but rather tends to break it up.

3. They are detrimental to the pupil himself in that they waste his time, cause his interest in the school to take second place or entirely wane, and force him to form a narrow group of friendships at the time when he should be reaching out and selecting his friends from as wide a circle as possible.

4. They are selfish and undemocratic. "The secret society in the school life of the individual is an expression of aristocratic idea," and since democracy finds its fullest expression in the public school these societies can not be justified, "upon the broad grounds of the largest democracy."

ANTI-FRATERNITY LAWS

In 1907 laws were passed by Indiana, Kansas and Minnesota, and regulations were adopted by the city of Madison, Wisconsin. In 1908 came the anti-fraternity law in Ohio, and prohibitory regulations by school boards of Worcester, Mass., and St. Joseph, Mo.

In 1909 California, Iowa, Nebraska, Oregon, Vermont and Washington passed laws against secret societies, while school boards of Lowell, Mass., Kansas City, Mo., and Oklahoma City passed prohibitory regulations. 1910 seems to have witnessed the enactment of no state laws, but the following cities adopted their own regulations: Denver, Meriden, Conn., Chicago, New Orleans, Butte, Mont., and Racine, Wisconsin. In 1911 came the anti-fraternity law of Michigan, and school board regulations in the cities of Covington, Kentucky, Waltham, Mass., Reading, Penn., Milwaukee, and Superior, Wisconsin. In 1912 came the anti-fraternity law of Mississippi.

All of these laws aim to make it possible for boards of education to control the situation. They may be divided, however, into general classes as follows: 1. Laws similar to those of California and Indiana which definitely state that school boards are required to enforce the provisions of the act. 2. These laws of which the Minnesota act is a good example, which excepts "such societies or organizations as are sanctioned by directors of said school." These acts give the school board full authority in cases where they wish to use it to make possible the regulating rather than extermination of certain societies. The penalty attached for the pupil who disregards the law ranges all the way from the denying of privileges to suspension or expulsion. The Minnesota law, which was enacted two years later in Iowa, also provides a penalty for "rushing" students in the high schools.

THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAW

In view of the fact that one of the first state laws was that of Indiana, it is quoted in full:

"The common schools of the State of Indiana, both elementary and high schools, shall be open to all children until they complete the courses of study in said common schools, subject to the authority of the teachers therein and to all the rules and regulations provided by the proper authorities for the government of such schools. It shall be unlawful for the pupils in any of the elementary or high schools of this state to form secret societies, fraternities or other similar organizations, in such schools; and the board of school commissioners or board of trustees of any school, town, or city, and the trustee of any school township, and the superintendent of any school, are hereby required to enforce the provisions of this act by suspending, or, if necessary, expelling a pupil in any elementary or high school who refuses or neglects to obey such rules or regulations or any of them."

It will be of interest to note how this law effects the strongest Indiana fraternity which established its second chapter as late at 1901, and now numbers 20 chapters, 16 of which are within the State of Indiana, and at least 5 of which have been established in that state since the passage of the act referred to. The chapter at Sheridan reports as follows:

"We have had no school opposition for we have been very careful and have not violated any of the laws of our school, and in this way we have grown more popular with the authorities and the people in general in the community." The chapter at Brazil reports that every Wednesday night they have some prominent citizen to give them a talk, and that they receive favorable comment from two leading newspapers. The chapter at Richmond, however, reports as a consequence of opposition, the active alumni members of the chapter were compelled to carry on the work and affairs of the chapter without any assistance from the high school members. The chapter at Bloomington reports that it has no opposition from the school authorities. "The members try to conduct themselves so as to avoid the criticism of the faculty." As these reports are all from chapters of the same fraternity, and of chapters that have been established since the passage of the Indiana law it shows how unevenly the law is enforced in that state.

The California law reads as follows:

1. From and after the passage of this act, it shall be unlawful for any pupil, enrolled as such in any elementary or secondary school of this state, to join or become a member of any secret fraternity, sorority or club, wholly or partly formed from the membership of pupils attending such public schools, or to take part in the organization or formation of any such fraternity, sorority or secret club; provided, that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent any one subject to the provisions of the section from joining the order of the Native Sons of the Golden West, Native Daughters of the Golden West, Foresters of America or other kindred organizations not directly associated with the public schools of the state.
2. Boards of school trustees, and boards of education shall have full power and authority to enforce the provisions of this act and to make and enforce all rules and regulations needful for the government and discipline of the schools under their charge. They are hereby required to enforce the provisions of this act by suspending, or, if necessary, expelling a pupil in any elementary or secondary school who refuses or neglects to obey any or all such rules and regulations.

SUMMARY OF THE FRATERNITIES' SIDE OF THE QUESTION

The fraternity journals are full of such headings as the following: "Convicted Without a Trial," in the Gamma Eta Kappa; "Why Should the Fraternity Be the Scapegoat," in the Kappa Phi. An article in one of these magazines was in two shades of type. Upon searching for the reason for this the following expression was found: "The article as it appears herewith was prepared by the editor for one of the San Francisco Yellow Journals on the Fraternities' side of the Question. . . . Though the city editor and reporter promised on their honor to run the article as written that part in the bold type was omitted. This was reprinted to show how the press treats the fraternity."

As the chairman of the committee has been particularly impressed with the sincerity of the tone of these complaints it has been deemed wise to incorporate a brief summary of the fraternity's side of the case into this report.

THE FRATERNITIES CLAIM

I. The argument against them have not been proven. (1) The scholarship argument is based on few facts and general impressions.

'They quote in their magazines statistics of good chapters as Alpha, of Gamma, Eta Kappa, which boast that 91.3% of members graduated from high school, 67.5% of members entered college, and 48.2% of members graduated from college. (2) Snobbishness exists only in a few cases, and should be punished where it exists by fraternity and school together. (3) They help school spirit by urging their men to enter school activities and succeed. (4) It is not undemocratic to choose the friends with whom you care to be thrown especially out of school hours.

II. There is a tendency to band together. To quote the heading of another article it is "The Fraternity Gang vs. the Street Gang," with all the argument in favor of "The Fraternity and a little bad with a deal of good, or the Street Gang, all bad and no good."

III. The boys go bad not because of their fraternity obligations, but in spite of them. We find this plea in the Kappa Chi Quarterly: "Wouldn't it be better then, instead of abolishing us and our ideals, that you join with us and help us impress upon our members the necessity of heeding their obligations? This can easily be accomplished by recognizing us, and thereby affording us a means of inflicting a penalty upon members who break their obligations."

IV. Most of the evils are present in "Locals" and "Near Fraternity" clubs. Prohibitory legislation works greatest hardship on the national fraternity which has ideals and strives to realize them.

POLICIES OF DEALING WITH THE FRATERNITY QUESTION

We may now briefly review the various policies that have been pursued in dealing with this matter.

I. The let alone policy. The growth of the anti-fraternity agitation is sufficient to prove that this policy will not do, as too many evils are found to exist with high school fraternities.

II. Policy of Substitution. (1) Literary, debating, musical, athletic, and other clubs in the school. The principals who tried this found that it only made more places of honor for fraternity members to hold, and the fraternity continued. This was because these clubs did not have the "gang" spirit of the social side. (2) Social clubs. These were tried in Berkeley with faculty members, but were used as "first degree" work for the fraternity for the most part. The main trouble was that the fraternity still existed as an outlaw.

III. The policy of prohibition. This has been tried now for 5 years in some States. The Indiana situation has been already discussed. It has been tried in California for 3 years—long enough for every member of a Greek letter society to have graduated from the high school. We may therefore discuss

PRESENT CONDITIONS IN CALIFORNIA

The committee believes that it has sufficient evidence to justify it in the following conclusions:

1. Fraternities exist now in at least 8 more cities of California than in 1909.

2. The sub rosa condition is worse for the boys, the school and the home than an open and above board policy.

3. The fraternities that have ceased initiating high school pupils are the ones that have the highest ideals and the fraternities that have no respect for law now flourish. In this connection we quote from the monthly of a middle western fraternity which, by the way, has not been admitted as a member of the Grand Inter-Fraternity Council: "But five years ago, with one chapter and a membership of 25, has grown to the extent of 39 chapters on the roll and a membership of 800." (January, 1912.)

4. The national organizations that have strong alumni councils to enforce their principles and tend to work in the open are discriminated against in favor of the many sub rosa locals. In this connection in the report of the installation of a new chapter in Los Angeles of one of the national fraternities, April 26, 1912, we find that these boys had been operating in Los Angeles High for many years as a local, and "more than held their own with the foremost nationals," and proceeds to name a list of the highest school offices held by these boys. In an article advocating the expansion of a certain fraternity we find the following from the pen of an ex-national president: "I have traveled considerably over the Southern States in the past two years and in nearly every town of 3,000 inhabitants and up I find a bunch of the best felloows associated together as a club or local frat."

5. In many places the school authorities do not believe in the present law or are openly in sympathy with the fraternities. A man

who ranks high in school administration in California is quoted in one of the fraternities' journals as follows:

"The law which denies a high school education to the youth who desires to join, with the consent of his parents, a high school fraternity, is a travesty on justice, because it is prohibitive legislation, not directed to the equal protection of the individual's right to life, property, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but to the gratification of somebody's ignorant or bigoted prejudice."

A chapter of one of the nationals in one of our largest cities reports to headquarters as follows: "Some of the authorities deep down favor our existence."

6. The Grand Inter-Fraternity Council of the United States offers a chance for co-operation between fraternities and school people to remove the more serious evils of the fraternities. The recommendations of this council are as follows:

1. Public and abusive initiations be abolished.
2. The consent of parents or guardian be obtained before initiation.
3. Pupils be initiated only after the satisfactory completion of the first or freshman year at a high or preparatory school, and that the pledging of pupils in the grade or grammar schools be prohibited.
4. No fraternity shall initiate as a member anyone who has been a member of another school fraternity, without the consent of the fraternity of which he was a member.
5. No intoxicating liquors be served at any function of a fraternity; that none be allowed in the rooms at any time, and that the use of intoxicating liquors by active members (those still attending school) shall be forbidden.
6. The formal social functions of a fraternity chapter shall be limited to one formal dance and one formal banquet each year and that the amount to be spent on these functions shall be limited by agreement among the chapters of the council fraternities in each city.
7. Every effort shall be made to reduce the running expenses of the chapter.
8. Rooms shall not be maintained by any chapter except under supervision of the fraternity alumni or the school faculty.
9. Literary exercises, reviews of books, essays, debates, and talks by prominent men be held in conjunction with regular chapter meetings.
10. When rooms are maintained, school officers and parents shall be allowed access to them at all times except during meetings.
11. When occasion warrants, arrangements shall be made to admit proper school

officials to meetings and initiations. 12. That fraternity meetings be adjourned not later than 11 p. m. 13. Members shall be prohibited from holding offices in the fraternities or chapter whose school standing is below the requirements of the school. 14. That all affiliated fraternities adopt and enforce strict scholarship requirements and reports in their chapters and work toward maintaining high scholastic standing. 15. That the use of the abbreviation or the term "Frat" be abolished. 16. Members shall be expelled for improper conduct rather than their acts be endorsed at a sacrifice to the chapter, the fraternity and the school fraternity system. 17. That secrecy be abolished except as to pass words, grip, and ritual, as these are all that are essential, and to enforce secrecy in other directions often prevents a proper defence from unjust criticism. 18 and 19. Regarding arrangements and carrying out these plans.

7. The present law is poorly drawn, in fact there is reason to suppose it was given its present form in the belief that it would be held unconstitutional. Judge Hunt in the Manly case said: "I am of the opinion that the anti-fraternity law was poorly drawn, as it does not state exactly what the law was enacted to effect." Judge Seawall in the Bradford case remarked that the law was constitutional, but that there were flaws which the legislature should amend.

8. Many eastern fraternities are discussing a policy of expansion and the Fair of 1915 will bring many members west and lead to the establishment of many locals into national chapters.

"Naturally any member of the —v—— fraternity having lived in the far West would like to see a chapter of the dear old frat organized in the city in which he resides. The chances of organizing _____ in the West are excellent, mainly because of the fact that there is no high school fraternity in this part of the United States as strong as

.....
"Many _____ will come west to the World's Fair at San Francisco in 1915, and while in this section will stop off at principal cities. Why not make plans now and organize chapters at that time?"

RECOMMENDATIONS

Your committee respectfully recommends:

1. That this association go on record as favoring the repeal of the present anti-fraternity statute.

2. That this association go on record as favoring a law that will be most carefully drawn up to give school boards full power to legislate against fraternities where they feel these societies are a detriment, but will also allow school boards (if they see fit) to try a policy of regulation.

3. That this association have a standing committee of three on fraternities, (1) to report at each meeting until otherwise instructed, (2) to co-operate with the California Council of Education and others interested in progressive legislation on the secret societies in schools.

4. That the California Council of Education be requested to appoint a committee to help direct the legislature on this matter.

5. That this committee study the merits and demerits of the statute now in force in Minnesota and Iowa.

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